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REPORT ON BRITISH ANTI-INVASION DEFENCES (1940)

From: LONDON

To: MOSCOW

No: 922

22 Aug. 40

To the DIRECTOR.

1. The 20 mile zone forming a belt along the south-eastern coast of ENGLAND is one continuous military camp. It is forbidden to go there. According to the Press, 60 to 75% of the population has left this region. The main bulk of the A.A. artillery is in this region. The [B% whole] zone is divided into army, corps and divisional areas. It should be reckoned that the entire fighting strength[a] of the British Army, approximately [C% 1,300,000] men, is concentrated here, as, during my two day tour of all the military camps in the ALDERSHOT, SALISBURY, TIDWORTH, BULFORD district, I only came across units which had recently been called up and not a single tank. As regards tanks, I think that the British have transferred them to the war zone[c] and that as yet they have few of them.

2. Along the southern slopes of the hills north of the REIGATE-DORKING-GUILDFORD railway line, trenches are being dug and also, in places, anti-tank ditches. The ALDERSHOT district is being particularly well fortified. At either end of the bridges 1.5-metre concrete pillars have been placed, with corresponding slots into which iron bars are inserted in order to block the roads. In the water on either side of the bridges, piles or vertical obstacles consisting of lengths of rail, have been fixed. At all corners and cross-roads on the REIGATE-ALDERSHOT road block-houses have been erected. Presumably the British are constructing their second line of defence along the above line. This line of defence is not yet complete: its depth has not yet been determined. There is no A.A. artillery to be seen on the second line and, from my observation, it is only to be found in the coastal zone and around LONDON. Incidentally, at the beginning of the war batteries of 3.7-inch and 4.5-inch A.A. guns were sited in all LONDON parks and squares, but few of them are left now.

Distribution

[Continued overleaf]

[1 group unrecovered] fighter aircraft have the following zones of activity:

LONDON (the Metropolitan area) is excluded;

The territory between LONDON and the beginning of the war zone is included;

The war zone is excluded;

The English Channel is included.

This would explain the fact that on 19th August over LONDON itself a British fighter was shot down by A.A. fire.

No. 235

BARCh^[1]

Notes: [a] literally "reserve".

[b] [C% 1,300,000] : The figure in doubt is the 3. The first figure 1, is almost certainly right.

[c] war zone : Presumably the 20 mile coastal strip referred to in the first sentence.

Comments: [i] BARCh : Unidentified LONDON signatory.
